



*Message from Commissioner Odom*

From colonial days through the present, the fertile land of the lower Mississippi River Valley has made Louisiana one of the richest agricultural regions in America. Louisiana has always been a major producer of cotton and sugarcane, but the state firmly entrenched its position as a preeminent world supplier of cotton when the mechanical cotton picker was perfected in 1936. In addition to cotton, the sugar industry was revolutionized when 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial implements for sugarcane planting, cutting and loading came into widespread use. Rice also became a major commercial crop in Louisiana by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of steam technology and irrigation techniques.

But Louisiana has become famous nationally and internationally for several of its native agricultural products which were developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Louisiana nurserymen were the first to propagate superior pecan tree genotypes, and today the state is a leading producer of pecan nuts.

The Atchafalaya River Basin fishermen popularized the consumption of crawfish, and the state hosts thousands of acres of commercial crawfish ponds providing a significant source of income for agricultural interests. Alligator farm production supplies the international market with high quality exotic leather. Because of these grass root movements, Louisiana has become the nation's largest producer of crawfish and alligator hides.

Progressive agricultural innovations have also allowed Louisiana citrus and vegetable growers to feed American consumers. But the most significant modern agricultural development in the state was the rise of forestry. With the economic impact from paper-making and lumber, the dollar value of forestry to the state's economy is greater than all of the other agricultural endeavors combined.

Today, Louisiana remains one of the nation's largest producers of cotton, sugarcane, rice, sweet potatoes and pecans, and is also a major producer of soybeans and corn.

The numbers compiled within this historical publication reflect the hard work of Louisiana producers, and we thank them for their participation in surveys conducted by the Louisiana Statistics Office.

Sincerely,

*Bob Odom*

Bob Odom  
Commissioner